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Faith, and a good Conscience, Illustrated

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To W.^m Marston

S E R M O N,

delivered at the ORDINATION of

The Reverend WILLIAM BROWN,

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1 Timothy I. 19. *Holding faith and a good Conscience.*

These words are closely connected in sense with the preceding, which are these; "This charge I commit unto thee, Son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou mightest war a good warfare." Then follows the text, 'Holding faith and a good Conscience.' Timothy was a young man introduced into the ministry by Paul his spiritual father, who charged him, in the execution of his ministry, to war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience; to fight valiantly as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, having and retaining, under all trials and temptations, the true faith of the Gospel, and a good Conscience; which he could do in no other way, than by faithfully discharging the various duties of the ministry.

Our text therefore naturally suggests two subjects of inquiry.

1. What is the true faith of the gospel?
2. What is to be done by a minister of the gospel that he may hold a good conscience?

I. What is the true faith of the gospel?

By the true faith is intended that which is saving or is justifying, or which is accounted for righteousness to all those who are the subjects of it. It is a matter of great importance that we have just ideas of that faith, which is the necessary prerequisite and absolute condition of our justification.

justification. I hope therefore this numerous auditory will afford their patient attention, while we endeavour to investigate the nature of this cardinal Christian grace.

It is manifest, that by justifying *faith*, the Scripture always means such a faith as implies, or is certainly connected with, a compliance with the gospel. By compliance with the gospel I mean an obedience to the precepts of it, those which relate to the temper and affections of the heart, as well as those which relate to the external actions of life. Those which relate to the affections of the heart, are those which require reconciliation to God, sincere and supreme love to God, repentance of sin, reconciliation to the gospel, and especially to Christ, the great subject of the gospel, and sincere love to our fellow men. No man complies with the gospel, whatever his external conduct may be, without these gracious affections. And these will naturally lead to external compliance, both in a conscientious attendance on the institutions of divine worship, and in a conscientious observance of the duties of a strict morality, in justice, truth, fidelity and beneficence.

That by true and saving faith, the gospel means such a faith, as either implies in its very nature, or infers as a necessary consequence, such a compliance with the gospel as has been now described, is manifest from various considerations. Any other faith, than that which implies, or is connected with compliance with the gospel, is called a *dead* faith, and is condemned as not saving.

James

James II. 14. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man have faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" Plainly importing, as you see, that a faith which does not imply, or is not connected with good works, is unprofitable and not saving. See also the 17th, verse of the same chapter; "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." Obedience to the gospel is constantly spoken of as necessary to salvation, and those who disobey it are constantly said not to be entitled to salvation, but to be exposed to damnation.--As Mat. VIII. 26. Every one that heareth the sayings of Christ, and doth them not, is likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand, and it fell with a great catastrophe. But he that heareth the sayings of Christ and doth them, is likened to a wise man, that built upon a rock; so that his house stood, and he obtained the end of his labour in building it. James I. 23. "If any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." John VIII. 31. "If ye continue in my word then are ye my disciples indeed." Ch. XV. 14. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Now he that has saving faith is blessed with a sure title to salvation. But no man is thus blessed, but he who continueth in the law of liberty

ty and is a doer of the work which it prescribes. Therefore between saving faith and the doing of this work, there is an established connection. Those who have saving faith, are Christ's real friends and his disciples indeed. But none are entitled to these characters, but those who continue in Christ's word and do whatsoever he hath commanded. Therefore saving faith and compliance with the gospel are infallibly connected.

The same truth appears from this, that love to God, love to Christ, repentance of sin, universal love to mankind, and love to the brethren are throughout the gospel, represented as absolutely necessary to salvation.--Rom. VIII. 7. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." But "to be carnally minded is death;" and only "to be spiritually minded is life and peace:" and they that are in the flesh, cannot please God." "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." 1 John II. 9. 10. "He that saith, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light." Ch. III. 14. 15. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 1 Cor. XIII. 1--4. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not
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charity, I am become as founding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gifts of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have *all Faith*, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity ; I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity ; it profiteth me nothing."

These are a few of the scriptural testimonies to the absolute necessity of cordial compliance with the gospel, in order to an inheritance of the saving blessings of it. But saving faith is absolutely connected with those blessings. It follows therefore, that saving or justifying faith either involves in its very nature, or is indissolubly connected with a cordial compliance with the gospel, in heart and life.

If this then be an established principle, our next inquiry will be, What kind of faith is that, which either involves, or is certainly connected with, a cordial compliance with the gospel.

To this inquiry I answer, that a mere intellectual, speculative or doctrinal assent to the gospel is not certainly connected with a cordial compliance with the gospel.--This is evident from several considerations.--First, from this, that this kind of faith exists in perfection in the devils and damned. Jam. II. 19. "Thou believest that there is one God ; thou dost well : the devils also believe and tremble." If it be said, that we cannot argue from the case of the devils, as they are in a reprobate state ; whereas we are in a state of probation : and though belief in the devils is not
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followed with reconciliation, it may be followed with that effect in us, who are in a state of probation: To this I reply, that belief in the reprobate will produce all the effect, which it will produce in men who are in a state of probation, except that which arises from the prospect of the favour of God, and which is therefore the fruit of our natural self-love. But love to God and Christ from the motives of mere self-love, were it to ever so great a degree to follow from doctrinal faith, would be no true and saving compliance with the gospel. "If ye love those that love you, what thank have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" If ye follow Christ merely because of the loaves, how are ye better than the unbelieving Jews?

Besides, the very argument of the apostle James in the text just cited from him, is, that if we have no other faith than the devils have, we have no evidence of a title to salvation. It is as if the Apostle had said, Thou believest, that there is one God; so far is well; yet this is no proof that thy faith is saving; because the devils have the same faith, which is a full proof that thy faith is essentially defective.--But on the principle of the objection, an answer to this reasoning of the apostle would have been at hand: the answer is this; but if the devils have the same faith which I have, this is no proof, but that my faith is genuine and saving. For they are not in a state of probation.--Therefore that faith, which is not saving to them now, would be saving to them, were they in such a state as I am in; and it is no objection to the genuineness of my faith, or to its sure connection

with salvation, that the devils have the same. --Thus unless we allow, that the apostle under inspiration argues inconclusively; we must believe, that the faith of devils, or a merely speculative and doctrinal faith, has no certain connection with a real and saving compliance with the gospel.

If a merely speculative faith have a natural tendency to compliance with the gospel, or be certainly connected with compliance, what is the dead faith of which the scriptures speak? On this principle it will follow, that there is no such thing as a dead faith which is without saving profit; of which however the scripture makes express mention. If speculative faith be certainly connected with compliance with the Gospel, all who have it will certainly be saved, and it naturally tends to this compliance. And if it naturally tend to this compliance, it is a lively, operative faith, a faith which worketh by love. If so, what is a dead faith? If it should be said, that a speculative faith, in some low degree, is a dead faith; but in a higher degree, it worketh by love, the answer is easy; that if this be the general nature of a speculative faith, it will in all its various degrees more or less work by love. It will in its lowest degree have the same tendency in kind, as in its highest; and will actually be followed with something of the same effect; and that according to the degree of it: as genuine and sincere love to God, in its lowest exercises, tends to the proper effects of love and actually produces those effects according to the measure of the love it self. Not even the lowest degree of this love can be called a dead love. So if the nature of speculative faith were of the like ten-

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dency to a compliance with the gospel, none of its exercises could be called a dead faith.

If mere speculative faith, in which is involved no emotion of the heart or will, be the saving faith of the gospel, saving faith is not of a moral nature, the exercise of it is not a duty, and the omission of it or unbelief, is no sin; and it is as absurd to exhort a man to believe, as to exhort a blind man to see the Sun; as absurd to threaten him for unbelief, as to threaten a deaf man for not hearing the sound of a trumpet; as absurd to praise and reward a man for believing, as to praise and reward him for feeling the warmth of a summer's day; and as absurd to blame and punish a man for unbelief, as to blame and punish an idiot for not seeing the truth of a mathematical theorem.

Yet nothing is plainer in the scripture, than that mankind are constantly exhorted to believe; are threatened for unbelief; are entitled by faith to the reward of eternal life; and unbelief is properly called the damning sin.--These things it is conceived clearly demonstrate, that the saving faith of the gospel is a moral act, an exercise of emotion of the heart or will, and not of the intellect only.

If it should be still thought, that a speculative faith, if raised to a proper degree, will lead the subject to a cordial compliance with the gospel without repeating what has been already said that on that supposition it will according to the degree of it, have the same effect even in the smallest exercises; that faith is not a moral act nor a proper matter of exhortation, command and reward; nor unbelief a proper matter of denunciation, threatening and punishment: it may be

be further observed, that on that supposition regeneration is no change in the heart or temper, but wholly a change in the intellect, or it consists in a new revelation; consequently a man to whom that change or that revelation is not given, is no more blamable for not believing, than they to whom the sacraments of the new Testament have not been made known, are to be blamed for not observing them. The unbeliever in this case is the proper object of pity, but not of reprehension.

Further, the principle which I am opposing, implies, that the heart of man is not naturally depraved: Because as soon as the increase of the capacity or the new revelation is given to the intellect, the heart immediately receives the truth and complies with it. The heart therefore is previously and naturally disposed aright, and so is not depraved: or at least not so depraved, but that as soon as the requisite increase of capacity or the revelation is given to the intellect, the heart immediately and readily complies: which is directly contrary to all that the scriptures teach us concerning the entire depravity of the human heart by nature.

If man, as soon as sufficient knowledge or light is communicated to him, cheerfully receive and comply with it, he is undoubtedly previously disposed to comply with it. And he that is disposed to comply with the light of truth; is not surely totally depraved, but has a heart friendly to the truth; and that is a good heart, and not a heart totally dead in trespasses and sins. --He who is disposed to comply with the light of truth, as it appears; is already disposed to act according to the best of his knowledge; or to express it in familiar language, he is disposed to do as
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well as he knows how to do. And what more can be required of any man than this?—Such a man is so far from being totally depraved, as the scripture teaches us that mankind are by nature, that he is totally disposed to act and live aright; or in other words, he is totally sanctified; and he needs only to have the capacity and knowledge of an archangel, and he will be as holy.

These are some of the considerations, which seem to prove, that a mere speculative faith neither involves nor is certainly connected with a cordial compliance with the gospel, and therefore cannot be justifying and saving faith.

But if beside the assent of the understanding to the truth of the gospel, we take into our Idea of faith the consent of the heart or will; such faith does involve or is certainly connected with a cordial compliance with the gospel.

He who cordially consents to the scheme, of the gospel, rejoices in it; and he who rejoices in that scheme rejoices in Jesus Christ, the great subject of the scheme. He who rejoices in Christ will rejoice in God, and love him sincerely and supremely. He who loves God, will love his law, and love to obey it. He who loves the law will abhor every violation of it, his own violation of it in particular, and will repent in dust and ashes. He who loves God and is benevolently disposed to the interest of his Kingdom, will be benevolent to all intelligent creatures, so far as consistent with the prosperity of God's Kingdom and therefore will sincerely love his fellow-men in general, and particularly those who appear to be friends to the same kingdom of God and to be the subjects of it. He who is the subject of these inward graces, will of course go into an eternal

ternal conduct correspondent to them. Thus will he who is the subject of that faith which contains a consent of heart, as well as an assent of the understanding to the truth, naturally and certainly yield a cordial compliance with the Gospel.

This then must be that faith which the scriptures consider as justifying and saving; as they certainly do always consider saving faith as involving, or inferring as a certain consequence, a cordial compliance with the gospel.

Concerning this faith and the nature of it, several further inquiries occur, which I beg leave now to propose and consider.

1. It is inquired, Why is this complex exercise, implying both an assent of the understanding and a consent of the will, called by the name of *faith*? Or why must we understand the word faith, which occurs so often in scripture, in this complex sense? Should we not rather understand it in the common sense of the word, as meaning a bare assent of the understanding to testimony? Why should we understand it in an unusual sense?

To all this I answer, that some of the reasons why we must in this sense understand the word *faith* so often repeated in scripture, have been already given, and they need not be repeated. --It may however be further observed, that a bare assent to the gospel could not properly be made the condition of justification and salvation, as it does not at all prepare a man for heaven or for pardon, justification or any of the special blessings of the Christian.

To be prepared for heaven a man ought to be of an holy heart; otherwise he cannot take plea-

pleasure in the displays of the divine holiness there exhibited; or in the holy inhabitants, or in the ho'y employments and holy pleasures of that holy World. To be prepared for a grateful acknowledgment of the infinite goodness and grace of God, in bestowing on him heaven, or pardon and his special favour here, a man must be fully sensible of his own unworthiness, demerit and sinfulness, must be a real penitent and in genuine repentance must comply with the gospel. There would manifestly be an impropriety in granting these blessings to a man not duly sensible of the infinite grace of God in the bestowment of them, or of his own dependance on that grace. Therefore there is a sufficient reason why something further than mere speculative faith is made the condition of pardon and salvation. And since the scriptures use the word faith to express that complex condition of pardon, this is to be sure a sufficient reason why we also should use it in the same sense.

Every Author has a perfect right to use words in his own sense, provided he does but explain or give notice of that sense. And since the writers of scripture have sufficiently shown us, that by faith they mean such a belief of the gospel, as is certainly connected with a compliance, and that this implies a cordial consent to the truth believed; therefore they have acted with no impropriety in using the word *faith* so as to include a cordial consent.

Nor is this a very uncommon use of the word. We often say, that a man does not believe a report or an information when he does not act agreeably to it. As if a man were informed that his house was on fire, and yet he should not

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exert himself to extinguish the flames or to escape; if a sick man were informed of a remedy for his disease of easy acquisition and sure or most probable success, and yet he should neglect it; if a child were taught by his parents a sure and feasible way to prosperity, honor, and happiness in life, and the child in practice should wholly disregard it; we should naturally in all these and many other cases say, that these persons respectively did not believe the information given them. No wonder therefore, that the scriptures say concerning those who act not agreeably to the information given in the gospel, that they believe it not.

2. It is also inquired, Why did not the scripture make use of some other word of more determinate meaning, and which should without a particular explanation, express the complex act of the mind, which is the condition of justification? To this it may be answered, that there does not appear to be any word of more determinate signification, which could have been used in this case. V.g. Suppose the word *receive* had been substituted in the lieu of faith, still we must have explained in what sense Christ or the gospel is to be received; whether with a mere speculative assent or with a cordial complacency: or if in complacency, whether that complacency must be directed immediately to Christ and the gospel themselves, or to the benefits merely, which we expect to derive from them. --Or if the word *love* had been the word, there would have been the same ambiguity concerning the nature and ground of the love, as was just now mentioned concerning the word *recieve*. --If this act had been expressed by the word *trust* still

still we should have had to inquire, in what sense we are to trust in Christ, whether as a sovereign, claiming and exercising the right to have mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will to harden; or whether we are to trust him in a belief, that we are the objects of his favour and not otherwise. Or if the word *obedience* or *compliance* had been chosen instead of faith; still there are different senses in which Christ may be obeyed, or the gospel complied with. This obedience may be external or internal; may proceed from the motive of mere self-love or from sincere and direct complacency in the truth.

3. Is justifying faith an *appropriating act*? And does the Christian in faith believe, that Christ is *his* Saviour, that he is converted and will be saved? If by *appropriation* be meant choosing Christ as our saviour, wishing to be saved by and through him, and in no other way, entirely approving and acquiescing in the method of salvation proposed in the gospel, and hoping to be saved in this way; doubtless all this is or may be contained in justifying faith. From the view of Christ's sufficiency to save, the believer may hope that he may be saved by him, though he do not at present believe that he is interested in him. --But if by *appropriation* be meant a belief that we are now interested in Christ, it is by no means an essential part of saving faith. Such an appropriation is not by any means necessarily connected with a cordial compliance with the gospel. A man may have, and many have had, this appropriation to a very high degree, and yet have lived in gross immorality. A man may have this appropriation, and yet not be pleased with the

the character of Christ only so far as he conceives or hopes, that he has derived, or is about to derive some benefit from him. He may still be greatly displeased with the holiness of Christ, and with his determination to punish sin and sinners continuing in sin. He may be displeased with the sovereignty of Christ and of his grace. He may be equally displeased with the gospel, the duties, the terms, and the conditions of it. He will therefore not receive either Christ or the gospel with any proper and direct complacency. In like manner he may be wholly without any compliance with the gospel in sincere and supreme love to God, in a chearful submission to him and to his sovereign grace in sincere repentance of sin. Whatever repentance and love he has, may be wholly the fruit of self-love.--So with respect to love to mankind and every other affection.--Therefore as this appropriation is by no means certainly connected with a compliance with the gospel, it cannot be saving faith.

4. Does saving faith imply either a belief, that Christ died for him in particular, who is the subject of the faith or a belief that he died for all men in such a sense at least, that he has made atonement for all? It is said by some that there is no foundation for me to exercise faith in Christ, but one or other of these; a belief that Christ died for me in particular, and made atonement for my sins in particular; or a belief that he hath made sufficient atonement for all mankind; that if I believe that he died for me in particular, I have a foundation on which to trust in him: Or if I believe that he hath made an atonement sufficient for all men, I still have a foundation on which I may trust in him for sal-

vation: but that beside these two there is no other foundation for faith or trust in him: that therefore all those who believe, that Christ hath made atonement for the sins of the elect only, must have the appropriating faith, or a faith which consists in believing that Christ died for them in particular.

Concerning all this I beg leave to observe, that if by saving faith we mean a trust or reliance on Christ in the persuasion, that he *will save us*, it must imply either a belief that he died for us in particular, or a belief that he died, and hath made atonement for all men. But if by saving faith we mean, as I conceive that we ought to mean, a firm belief of the report and doctrine of the gospel, and a firm belief of the character, offices, and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as a saviour, and a cordial complacency in him, and a willing acquiescence in the way of salvation through him; saving faith may exist in a man, who believes neither that Christ died for him in particular, nor that he has made atonement sufficient for all men.

5. Very similar to the last mentioned, is the following inquiry; Does the first exercise of saving faith imply a trust in Christ for salvation?--The answer wholly depends on the meaning of the expression *trust in Christ for salvation*. If by that expression be meant a confidence that Christ will save us in particular; I answer, that this is not the first exercise of saving faith. But if by *trusting in Christ* be meant a belief that Christ is the only saviour; that he is all-sufficient as a saviour; that he is able to save us and all who believe in him; that we depend on him for salvation, if ever we be to be saved, and that we wish to be sav-

saved in no other way, entirely approving the way which is through him ; as all this may be contained in the first act of saving faith, so trusting in Christ for salvation in this sense, is or may be the first act of faith.

6. Does saving faith *lead* to a compliance with the Gospel ? Is it the *cause* of that compliance which consists in sincere & supreme love to Christ, and to the Father, genuine repentance of sin, love of mankind &c. ? To this I answer, faith itself as it has been now explained, is at least in part a compliance with the gospel. To receive Christ with cordial complacency, is so far to comply with the gospel. But this act is not the cause of it self. It contains in its nature sincere love to Christ and to the whole Deity ; therefore it cannot be the cause of the first act of love to God or to Christ. So, as faith contains in its very nature the essence of a general compliance of heart with the gospel, it cannot be the cause of that compliance. To be the cause, it must be distinct from it, and so distinct from all cordial complacency in the gospel. But that faith which is distinct from complacency, is a mere speculative faith and therefore is not certainly connected with a saving compliance with the gospel. So that let our idea of faith be what it may, it is not the cause of compliance with the gospel. If faith imply a cordial consent to the truth, it cannot be the cause of compliance but involves it, so far as relates to the heart. If faith be a mere assent of the understanding, it cannot be the cause of compliance, as there is no certain connection between the one and the other. Speculative faith can work on those principles only, which are in the heart, but can never
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produce new principles or new tastes. Speculative faith concerning the utility of honey and its subserviency to health, will never produce a taste for honey in a man, who has no taste for it. If a man had no sense of honour or of shame; no information and belief concerning the use and necessity of that principle so common to men, would produce it in him. Nor if a parent were without the principle of natural affection, would any speculative belief concerning it, or information concerning his child, produce the yearning and desires of an affectionate Parent. But where ever the principle exists, it is easy to excite its proper emotions.

So where a principle of benevolence to intelligent beings, of love to God and to holiness exists, it is easy to draw it forth into its proper exercises. But where no such principle exists it is impossible to create the principle or to excite the exercises of love to God and holiness by mere speculative faith.

Many sinners who have no doubt concerning the facts and doctrines of the gospel, yea who have strong conviction of their own sin and danger in view of those doctrines; yet pretend not, and in fact are not reconciled to the gospel, so as cordially to comply with it, and perhaps show this by their subsequent lives.--Were it otherwise, did mere speculative faith communicate a new heart there would be no need of the influence of the divine spirit, unless it were to increase the faculties of intellect or to impress or reveal a new idea in it, which would be to produce an effect not of a moral nature, for being without which we are not blamable, and after we become the subjects of it, we are no way morally better, than we were before.

before. This would be not only regeneration by a physical operation, but it would be a regeneration, which would produce a physical effect, as much physical as would be the effect of changing the Ethiopian's skin or of adding a cubit to our stature.--But this, as has been shown, is no change of heart: nor is it certainly connected with a change of heart: and if it were certainly connected with such a change, that change would be effected by mere moral suasion and not by any influence of the spirit immediately on the heart or will. The increase of the faculty of intellect and the revelation or exhibition of any merely intellectual idea, can influence the heart by moral suasion only.

7. Does not justifying faith consist in a sight or view of the spiritual glory of the gospel, or in that assent to the divine original of the gospel, which immediately results from the view of its spiritual glory? And is not this view of spiritual glory or this spiritual light distinct from the exercise or complacency of the heart? Is it not antecedent to it and the immediate cause of it? This appears to be the idea of some; and they allow that this light is supernatural, and the effect of the immediate influence of the Spirit of God.--To this I answer; If this light be distinct from all exercises of the heart, there is no morality, no grace, no religion in it, more than in seeing the light of the sun; nor are we while destitute of this spiritual light, more obligated to have it, than the blind man is to see the light of the sun; nor is he who has it, any more praise-worthy, than he who having his eyes open sees the light of the Sun. In short, the observations in general, which have been made concerning mere speculative faith, are true with application to this spiritual light, which is supposed to be

be without all exercise of heart, and therefore is in reality nothing else but speculative faith, or speculative knowledge. For what is speculative knowledge, but Knowledge in the intellect merely, not involving any emotions of the heart or affections? And such this spiritual light, of which I am speaking, is supposed and described to be.-- As mere speculative faith cannot produce a new heart or holy love; so neither can spiritual light, if it be distinct from all emotion of heart, any more than speculation will produce natural affection or compassion, in him who is wholly destitute of the principles of those emotions.--And if this spiritual light did produce holy love, it would produce it by mere moral suasion, as it could in no other way operate on the mind at all. This would exclude all influence of the spirit *on the heart* in regeneration and whatever influence of the Spirit is admitted on this hypothesis, must be on the *bare intellect*, in enlarging its capacity, or in communicating a new revelation.

If it be said, that there is no new capacity given to the mind, nor new revelation communicated, but a view of the beauty and glory of old truths long since known; still if this glory be discerned by mere intellect, as it is, provided it be distinct from all emotion of heart; why is it not as much a new revelation as if some new truth were made known?

I beg leave further to observe, that the sight or apprehension of beauty or glory of any kind, is not prior to the love of that beauty, nor is distinct from it. We do not first see the beauty of a picture or of a countenance, and then are pleased with it. But the very sight of the beauty carries in it complacency. Nor is there any thing else

in complacency in a beautiful picture than the sight of its beauty. So with regard to beauty and glory in general.

8. Is faith the first exercise of grace in the regenerate Soul? Answer. If by faith we mean a mere speculative assent, it is neither the first nor the last exercise of grace, because it is no exercise of grace at all. It is no more an exercise of grace than the devils are the subjects of, while they believe and tremble. But if by faith we mean a *cordial* belief of the truth, implying a consent of the will to the gospel and complacency in Christ, this may or may not be the first exercise of grace. It implies regeneration and a new heart, or a new bias of the will. This new heart once given may exercise itself variously as objects are presented to view. Sometimes the first object coming into the view of the renewed soul may be Christ and his Spiritual glory: of course the new creature will exert itself in love to him and in cordially receiving him in his glorious character as a saviour. In other instances, the Deity in general may be the first object occurring to the view of the regenerate soul. In this case the first exercise of grace will be love to God. In some instances sin may be the first object; then the first exercise of grace will be repentance. But the most natural order of the exercise of the several graces seems to be, love to God; submission to his law; and in view of the righteousness and amiableness of the law, an abhorrence and repentance of sin, which is the violation and practical contempt of the law: in abhorrence of sin and in a desire to be delivered from it and the consequences of it, an acceptance of Christ as the deliverer, or Saviour.

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Objection. How can we love God unless we believe in him? But to believe in God is faith; therefore faith is before love and the foundation of it.

Answer. We must distinguish between belief in general and faith in Christ as the Saviour which is justifying faith. It is undoubtedly true that we cannot love God unless we believe that he exists. But a bare belief in the divine existence is not justifying faith. So that this objection proves not, that justifying faith is before any other exercise of grace. It only proves, that some belief concerning the object of any affection; is necessary to the exercise of that affection; which is not inconsistent with any thing which has been advanced.

9. What is the cause of faith? Why does one man believe and not another?

Answer. The same as is the cause of any other grace. God changes the heart; then the man is prepared for the exercise of any grace, truth and proper objects are presented; and for the exercise of faith as well as other graces. The faith is the gift of God.

10. Is faith a duty to which we are reasonably and morally obligated? It is said, that faith depends on evidence; that when evidence is presented, we must believe and cannot withhold our assent; but when it is not presented, we cannot believe; how then can faith be a matter of obligation.

Answer. If faith were a mere speculative assent of the intellect, this reasoning would be conclusive. In that case we should believe when evidence appeared, and could not, though ever so candid, believe without evidence. Nor should

we be blamable unless evidence were shut out by our prejudice.—But faith is a cordial belief of the truth. This depends not merely on real evidence, but on the temper of the heart. Therefore faith is as much a duty as love to God, love to Christ, repentance of sin &c. and it is a duty for the same reason that either of those is a duty. And for the same reason unbelief is a great sin.

11. But how can it be the duty of a man to believe, when he is dependent on God for faith and faith is his gift?

Ans. Doubtless it is the gift of God in the same sense as any grace is. Still it is a duty. So love to God; repentance of sin; love to mankind; the true and sincere practice of justice, truth and beneficence, are all his gifts. Yet all these are duties of indispensable obligation. Just so is faith in Christ.

If we be not in duty obligated to the exercise and practice of the several forementioned graces and virtues; we are not obligated to any thing, but what is agreeable to our own corrupt principles and biases; which is absurd and what no man will avow or vindicate.

The objection which we are considering is built on the ground, that nothing is our duty, with respect to which we are dependent on God. But if this be true, nothing at all is our duty, as we are dependent with respect to every thing, and are independent in nothing. The saints are dependent on God for grace to enable them to persevere and to make proficiency in Christian grace; and all men, as they live and move and have their beings in God, are dependent on him for power to perform the most common actions of life. Yet no man will pretend, that saints are not indis-

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penfably obligated to perfevere and to grow in grace; or that any man is not obligated to live in the practice of kindnefs and good neighbour-hood to all around him.

12. But how is a man in duty bound to believe when God hath not decreed that he fhall believe but has decreed to leave him without the gift of faith?

Ans. Notwithstanding any divine decree, it is our duty to believe for the fame reason as it is our duty to do any thing elfe, which God has not decreed to give us an inclination to do; for inftance to read the fcriptures, to pray, to worfhip God in any form, to pay our juft debts, to fpeak the truth &c. If any man neglect any of thefe duties, this very neglect proves, that God did not decree to influence him to perform the duty neglected, but did decree to permit the neglect of it. "For God decrees whatfoever cometh to pafs." Yet no man will hence argue, that the man who neglects thofe duties, commits no fin in that neglect.

It was the indifpenfable duty of Jofeph's brethren to love and to treat him with brotherly kindnefs. Yet they hated him, confpired againft him and fold him into Egypt. And it appears by the event, that all this was agreeable to the divine decree; nor did this decree in the leaft dif-folve their obligation to him.--It was the duty of Judas to have loved, revered and cleaved to his Lord. Yet he hated and betrayed him, and this is proved both by the event, and by the exprefs declaration of fcripture, to be agreeable to the divine decree. But this decree did not in the leaft releafe Judas from his obligation to his Lord.

God's decrees are not the rule of our duty; if they

they were; we could not know the rule of our duty before we acted, unless there were a prophecy of the event; and it would be impossible, that there should be any sin in the universe, as God decrees whatsoever comes to pass.

13. But does not this doctrine, that faith is a duty, favor self righteousness? Does it not afford some ground of self-applause to the sinner, to think that he is justified by faith; that faith is a duty, a good work, an amiable Christian grace; and that therefore, he is justified by his good work, by doing his duty in part at least? Answer. If by "justification by good work" be meant justification not before and without all good works or exercises of grace; no doubt every believer is justified by good work, and we are so far from denying or evading the charge, that we avow and defend it as evangelical truth. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Those therefore who have faith do please him. But they that are in the flesh cannot please him. Therefore in order to please God, we must not be in the flesh, but in the spirit, and must be sanctified and of course exercise the true grace of God. If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha i. e. let him be under the curse, and therefore while without the love of Christ, he is under the curse: and of course cannot be in a state of justification. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. By this it appears, that while we walk after the flesh and untill we begin to walk after the spirit, and to exercise the graces of the spirit, we are under condemnation. To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. There-

Therefore we can have no spiritual life or peace with God, and of course cannot be justified, till we are spiritually minded.

But if by justification by good work, be meant a justification which is obtained on the ground of any merit, satisfaction or atonement implied in our good work or made by it; this I utterly reprobate and deny that it is implied in any thing that has been said.

14. Does not this doctrine, that faith is the duty of all men, overthrow the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature. If the exercise of faith and other grace, be the indispensable duty of all men, will it not follow, that there is some good principle in mankind; some principle from which the exercise of grace may flow?--Answer. This by no means follows. Though it be the duty of all men to believe, they may not be disposed to do this duty. Though it is undoubtedly the duty of the saints to grow in grace, and to persevere in holiness to the end of life; yet without special grace they will not either persevere or grow in grace.

II. We come now to consider, What is to be done by a minister of the gospel, that he may hold a good conscience? As I have enlarged so much on the first head of my discourse, I must not dwell on this, but in general very summarily observe; that he must be faithful to his own soul, and maintain the constant exercise of divine grace, and close converse with God;--he must be faithful to his charge as a minister; faithful in his studies; in preaching the word; in his private dealings with the souls of men, and that according to their characters, whether saints or sinners; whether in health or in sickness and on a dying bed; whe-

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ther secure or awakened ; whether moral or immoral. He must be faithful as a ruler in the house of God, and faithfully dispence the discipline which Christ has instituted ; and must do it prudently, yet firmly ; with entire benevolence, yet without favour or affection, or respect to the persons of men. He must not only conscientiously do what he believes himself bound to do ; but he must take care to inform his conscience aright : for in this, as well as in all other cases, we are bound to judge according to truth : and we judge at our peril.

But passing by the many things which might be said under this head, I shall relieve your patience by proceeding immediately to close the discourse by an address,--1. To the pastor elect ; 2. To the Church and Society in this town.

I. TO THE PASTOR ELECT.

My young friend and fellow-labourer ; as the true and saving faith of our Lord Jesus Christ is so cardinal a subject of the Gospel, on which Christ and the Apostles have so much insisted, I thought it not unsuitable to the present occasion, to bring it somewhat largely into view, to explain it according to my ability and to consider the principal difficulties which have been raised concerning it. After the example of your divine Lord, you are to preach, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; and he that believeth not shall be damned." "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life : but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him." After the example of the apostles you are to preach, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved." "This is his commandment that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." The nature of this faith I have
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attempted to explain. This is the faith which you are to preach. You are not only to preach the necessity of faith in general ; but you are to explain the nature of true faith ; you are to distinguish it from several things which are called faith ; from a mere speculative faith ; from an appropriating faith ; from a mere confidence of our own good estate ; from every thing called by the name of faith which is not certainly connected with a compliance with the gospel. A mere speculative faith is no duty and can with no propriety be made the matter of exhortation. Nor is the appropriating faith a duty, unless we have evidence of our interest in Christ. But what evidence of this can there be by any other medium, than that of sanctification ? Point out in your sermons the danger of a false faith, and warn your people against delusion on that head. The danger is great. Thousands have been deluded, and thousands probably will be deluded in this particular. And perhaps as many have been and will be deluded by one as by the other of the kinds of false faith just mentioned.

If people have something more than a mere speculative faith, and together with their faith, have emotions of love ; lead them to enquire of what kind their love is ; whether it be selfish or benevolent and disinterested.

Together with this faith, preach those doctrines and those duties which are immediately connected with it ; such as the new birth, conversion, repentance unto life, supreme love to God, real and direct benevolence to mankind, the divine efficacious grace and the sovereignty of it, the saints perseverance, and endless rewards and punishments.--Preach the dependence of man on God
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for faith as well as for grace in general ; yet preach the *duty* of faith, even the duty of all men to whom the gospel is preached, to repent and believe the gospel, and that no man hath a right to procrastinate this duty at all. Preach also the fruits of faith, the external conduct naturally flowing from it, and the external marks of its genuineness.

Thus you will preach experimentally, practically, usefully, and with the divine blessing successfully. Thus having this faith in your own soul, and thus preaching it to others, you will comply with our text and "hold faith and a good conscience." Thus you will "be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up by the *words of faith* and of sound doctrine."

II. I shall in very few words address myself to the church and society in this town.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers; You also have heard what has been said concerning the distinguishing nature of saving faith. And if it be the duty of your pastor to preach this faith; it is your duty to exercise it; and to receive the truth, not only with a speculative assent; but with a cordial consent. Faith is a duty equally incumbent on you, as repentance, love to God, love to men, or any moral virtue. Therefore while any of you continue in unbelief you continue in sin; and you are to expect, that your pastor acting faithfully will reprove you for this, as well as for any other sin of which you may be guilty; that he will do what in him lies to convince you of it; and that by a clear exhibition of the necessity of faith, of the reasonableness of it, of the requisition of it by God, of the awful consequences of unbelief, and of the blessed consequences of true faith, he will urge you to a compliance with the calls in the gospel, to the exercise of faith and that im-

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mediately without any further delay.

Labour to get right Ideas of saving faith. Examine those which you may have hitherto entertained: examine whether they imply any more than a speculative assent; or at most an appropriation. As your pastor shall make these distinctions, apply them to your selves in close examination. Take heed that you amuse not yourselves with a false faith and false hope.

Just ideas of the true faith of Jesus Christ, and a careful examination of yourselves with respect to it, will happily, not only tend to preserve you from fatal delusion; but will tend to your growth in grace. The clear knowledge of the truth is the great mean appointed by God of growth in grace. And the knowledge of the truth in such a capital article as that of the Christian faith, is nearly connected with the knowledge of almost every important evangelical truth. It implies a knowledge of the gospel in general, and particularly a knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and therefore most directly tends to general Christian edification.

We sincerely congratulate you on the events of this day; that with so much peace and unanimity you have obtained the resettlement of the gospel ministry among you.

Cultivate purity and peace among yourselves. "The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable." And may there ever subsist the most cordial peace between you and your pastor. Such large societies as you are, are more apt to *fall out by the way*, than those which are smaller; and perhaps they are more apt to deviate from purity. Let me therefore beseech you to be on your guard in both these respects. Your pastor
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is young and comparatively unexperienced: therefore you are not to expect so much from him on that account.--It will be your duty, in the arduous work to which he is called, to assist him by your prayers, by your kind advice, by your influence, and by all the ways in your power. Thus while he is labouring for your spiritual good, you will be labouring for the same important object.

Thus may you be long happy together, fellow-labourers, though in different capacities, in the same common cause. And having happily and successfully united your labours here, may you in due time be received unitedly to partake of the blessed fruits of your respective labours, in the Kingdom of perfect peace and glory, where you shall respectively "rest from your labours and your works shall follow you."

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